

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A fuel injection control method for controlling a fuel injection characteristic of a pressure boosting common rail fuel injection apparatus, the pressure boosting common rail fuel injection apparatus including a fuel injection valve which directly injects fuel into a combustion chamber of an internal combustion engine; a common rail which stores fuel having a predetermined pressure and supplies the fuel to the fuel injection valve; and a pressure boosting device that increases the pressure of the fuel supplied to the fuel injection valve from the common rail to a predetermined boosted pressure that is higher than the predetermined pressure of the fuel in the common rail, and the pressure boosting common rail fuel injection apparatus performing boosted pressure fuel injection by operating the pressure boosting device so as to increase a fuel injection pressure of the fuel injection valve when necessary, the fuel injection control method comprising the steps of:

deciding a fuel injection amount that is an amount of fuel to be injected from the fuel injection valve according to an engine operating state when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed; and

deciding a pressure boosting period that is defined as a time interval from when operation of the pressure boosting device is started until when the fuel injection is started, based on a relationship that is defined in advance using the decided fuel injection amount and an engine rotational speed,

wherein when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed, the pressure of the fuel in the common rail is controlled to a constant base rail pressure irrespective of the engine operating state, fuel injection starting time is decided based on a relationship that is

defined in advance using the fuel injection amount and the engine rotational speed, and operation starting time of the pressure boosting device at which operation of the pressure boosting device is started is decided based on the decided fuel injection starting time and the pressure boosting period.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 14, ~~claim 15~~, wherein the pressure boosting period is set to a negative value in a case where the fuel injection is started before the operation of the pressure boosting device is started, and the pressure boosting period is set to a positive value in a case where the fuel injection is started after the operation of the pressure boosting device is started.

17. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 16, wherein a relationship between the operation starting ~~timing~~ time of the pressure boosting device and the fuel injection timing is set according to the engine operating state such that

i) in a case where the engine is operated at an intermediate load, the fuel injection is started before the operation of the pressure boosting device is started, and the fuel injection is ended after the operation of the pressure boosting device is started, and before the pressure of the fuel supplied from the common rail to the fuel injection valve reaches the boosted pressure;

ii) in a case where the engine is operated at a load lower than the intermediate load, the fuel injection is ended before the operation of the pressure boosting device is started;

iii) in a case where the engine is operated in a vicinity of a maximum torque point, the fuel injection is started after the operation of the pressure boosting device is started, and before the pressure of the fuel supplied from the common rail to the fuel injection valve reaches the boosted pressure, and the fuel injection is ended after the pressure of the fuel reaches the boosted pressure; and

iv) in a case where the engine is operated in a vicinity of a maximum output point, the fuel injection is started after the operation of the pressure boosting device is started, and after the pressure of the fuel supplied from the common rail to the fuel injection valve reaches the boosted pressure.

18. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 14, ~~claim 15~~, wherein the pressure boosting device is prohibited from being operated in a case where the fuel injection is ended before the operation of the pressure boosting device is started.

19. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 14, ~~claim 15~~, wherein switching is performed between the boosted fuel injection and normal pressure fuel injection that is performed with the pressure boosting device being in a non-operated state; the base rail pressure is set to a value equal to a lowest fuel injection pressure during the boosted pressure fuel injection; and in a case where the fuel injection pressure lower than the base rail pressure is required when the normal pressure fuel injection is performed, the pressure of the fuel in the common rail is set to a value lower than the base rail pressure by opening a pressure reducing valve provided in the common rail.

20. (Previously Presented) The fuel injection control method according to claim 19, wherein the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed in a first engine operating region in which the engine is operated at a high load; the normal pressure fuel injection is performed with the fuel injection pressure being set to the value lower than the base rail pressure in a second engine operating region in which the engine is operated at a load lower than the high load; and an engine operating region is provided in the first engine operating region in a vicinity of a boundary between the first engine operating region and the second engine operating region, and in the engine operating region, the fuel injection is performed with the pressure of the fuel in the common rail being set to a value equal to the base rail pressure, and

with the pressure boosting device being in the non-operated state.

21. (Previously Presented) The fuel injection control method according to claim 19, wherein when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed, a valve opening period of the fuel injection valve is decided based on a relationship that is predefined in advance using the pressure boosting period and the fuel injection amount; and when the normal pressure fuel injection is performed, the valve opening period of the fuel injection valve is decided based on the pressure of the fuel in the common rail and the fuel injection amount.

22. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 14, ~~claim 15~~, wherein switching is performed between the boosted fuel injection and normal pressure fuel injection that is performed with the pressure boosting device is in a non-operated state; the base rail pressure is set to a value equal to a lowest fuel injection pressure during the boosted pressure fuel injection; and in a case where the fuel injection pressure lower than the base rail pressure is required when the normal pressure fuel injection is performed, the pressure of the fuel in the common rail is set to a value lower than the base rail pressure by controlling a discharge flow rate of a high pressure fuel injection pump which supplies the fuel to the common rail.

23. (Previously Presented) The fuel injection control method according to claim 22, wherein the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed in a first engine operating region in which the engine is operated at a high load; the normal pressure fuel injection is performed with the fuel injection pressure being set to the value lower than the base rail pressure in a second engine operating region in which the engine is operated at a load lower than the high load; and an engine operating region is provided in the first engine operating region in a vicinity of a boundary between the first engine operating region and the second engine operating region, and in the engine operating region, the fuel injection is performed with the pressure of the fuel in the common rail being set to a value equal to the base rail pressure, and

with the pressure boosting device being in the non-operated state.

24. (Previously Presented) The fuel injection control method according to claim 22, wherein when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed, a valve opening period of the fuel injection valve is decided based on a relationship that is predefined in advance using the pressure boosting period and the fuel injection amount; and when the normal pressure fuel injection is performed, the valve opening period of the fuel injection valve is decided based on the pressure of the fuel in the common rail and the fuel injection amount.

25. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 14, ~~claim 15~~, wherein when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed, a valve opening period of the fuel injection valve is decided based on a relationship that is defined in advance using the pressure boosting period and the fuel injection amount.

26. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 14, ~~claim 15~~, wherein when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed, the operation of the pressure boosting device is stopped simultaneously with an end of the fuel injection from the fuel injection valve.

27. (Currently Amended) The fuel injection control method according to claim 14, ~~claim 15~~, wherein when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed, the operation of the pressure boosting device is stopped before an end of the fuel injection from the fuel injection valve.

28. (Currently Amended) A fuel injection apparatus comprising:  
a fuel injection valve which directly injects fuel into a combustion chamber of an internal combustion engine;  
a common rail which stores fuel having a predetermined pressure and supplies the fuel to the fuel injection valve;

a pressure boosting device which increases the pressure of the fuel supplied to the fuel injection valve from the common rail to a predetermined boosted pressure that is higher than the predetermined pressure of the fuel in the common rail; and

a controller which decides a fuel injection amount that is an amount of fuel to be injected from the fuel injection valve according to an engine operating state when boosted pressure fuel injection is performed with the pressure boosting device being operated so as to increase a fuel injection pressure of the fuel injection valve, and which decides a pressure boosting period that is defined as a time interval from when operation of the pressure boosting device is started until when the fuel injection is started, based on the decided fuel injection amount and an engine rotational speed,

wherein when the boosted pressure fuel injection is performed, the pressure of the fuel in the common rail is controlled to a constant base rail pressure irrespective of the engine operating state, fuel injection starting time is decided based on a relationship that is defined in advance using the fuel injection amount and the engine rotational speed, and operation starting time of the pressure boosting device at which operation of the pressure boosting device is started is decided based on the decided fuel injection starting time and the pressure boosting period.